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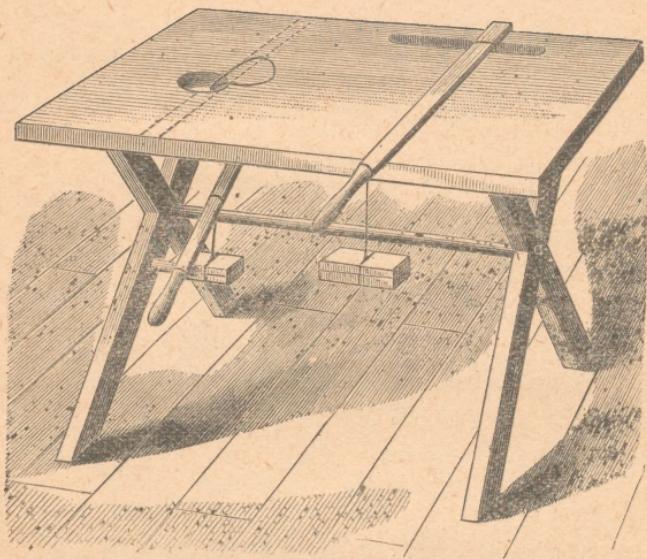
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# CAPONS AND CAPONIZING.

A BOOK FOR  
EVERY POULTRY RAISER.

BY  
GEORGE Q. DOW,  
OF NORTH EPPING, N. H.

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SYRACUSE, N. Y.  
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## PREFACE.

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THERE seems to be need of a book of instructions on the subject of Caponizing, written by a person who has had practical experience in performing the operation. In attempting to meet this want, the writer has exerted himself to cover the ground thoroughly and make the subject plain to all. He has endeavored to use such language as will be understood by the school-boy, the farmer, and the amateur, as well as by the professional poultry raiser.

If this work should cause the American people to give more attention to Caponizing, and induce them to practice the art more generally, he will feel that his efforts have not been lost.

GEORGE Q. DOW.

North Epping, N. H.

PRESS OF  
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# CAPONIZING.

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*"And then, the Justice,  
In fair round belly with good Capon lin'd."*

## FIRST CAPONS.

WHEN and where a cockerel was first caponized, is a question that will never be answered. But from the above lines taken from Shakespeare we may know that the art was practiced, and a good capon appreciated in his days.

The fact that the art of caponizing is attracting more attention, and being more extensively practiced every year, is conclusive evidence that our poultry breeders are beginning to realize the importance of raising capons.

## ADVANTAGES OF CAPONIZING.

The object of caponizing is to improve the quality, and increase the quantity of the flesh of fowls. The meat of capons becomes extremely delicate and juicy, while the birds grow to nearly the size of turkeys. A capon will outgrow a cock of the same age, just as an ox will exceed a bull in weight, and for the same

reason. This is that castration causes an animal to be less restless and quarrelsome, and therefore less of the food it digests is diverted from flesh-forming. The fact that cockerels of large breeds will weigh from ten to fifteen pounds after being caponized, would seem to be sufficient inducement for poultry keepers to adopt the art, even if we say nothing about the quality of the meat being greatly improved.

Another important fact that should attract the attention of all poultry raisers, is that our markets, at the present time, are but sparsely supplied with capon meat, and quick sales at large prices await all who will furnish it. The demand for the capon is in some respects similar to that for spring broilers, owing to there being too many well-developed cockerels in the market. The good feeder wants something more palatable than a full-grown cockerel, and will have it, if possible, regardless of cost. The first capons in February meet with a quick sale, and later animals also sell very high. At the poultry shows held in Paris every year, and at the markets there, nearly all the birds exhibited in the dead poultry class are capons. In France they seldom let a fowl mature as a cockerel, unless for breeding purposes, but all are caponized.

The day is not far distant when the American poultry raiser will have to caponize his young

cockerels, or he will not be able to dispose of them. The sooner the poultry men and farmers realize this fact, the sooner and better prepared they will be to furnish capons for market. When capons can be readily obtained, it will be as difficult to sell a cockerel chicken for eating as it would a four years' old hen. People will not buy tough cockerels to eat, when they can get plump, tender, and rich-meated capons. And that time is not so far away as some may think. Within the past three years the practice of caponizing has received more attention in the United States than ever before, and there are at least ten poultry breeders caponizing their fowls at the present time, where there was one four years ago. The subject is better understood than it has been, and people are beginning to realize that there is nothing difficult about performing the operation. They also see that they have much to gain by doing so. In the near future the people of the United States will follow the example of the French, and caponizing will be quite generally practiced.

The greatly increased value of his fowls resulting from the practice of this simple operation is certainly a strong argument in favor of its general adoption. When ordinary dressed poultry brings in the market from ten to fifteen cents a pound, capons readily sell for from twenty to thirty cents a pound.

A cockerel that will only weigh four or five pounds if let alone, can be made to weigh from eight to ten pounds if caponized—thus making a gain, say, of four pounds in weight, and ten cents a pound in price. It takes no more feed to raise one than the other; a fact which has been repeatedly demonstrated.

If caponizing was universally practiced in this country, the increase in the value of chicken meat would be enormous. Probably ninety per cent. of all the cockerels that are grown, are sold for food. If, at no great expense, their value could be doubled, as it would be by caponizing, it is easy to see an immense advantage would accrue to their owners. It does not necessarily follow, that, in order to make it profitable for a man to caponize, or desirable for him to learn, he must be largely engaged in the business of raising fowls for market. If the weight of the fowls can be largely increased and the quality of the meat greatly improved, it will be profitable for the farmer, as well as the man who makes a specialty of poultry, to caponize the cockerels which are designed for his own table, as well as those which he designs to sell.

In fact, it seems advisable for all who keep chickens to caponize every cockerel not wanted for breeding. It will surely increase both weight and value very much, and if the capons

are not wanted for market, they will be much appreciated by the family at home.

## NOT A CRUEL OPERATION.

The pain caused the birds by the operation is not to be compared with that which they frequently suffer when being allowed to mature as cockerels. One lively fight between two cockerels probably causes each of them more pain than they would experience by being caponized a half a dozen times. Where several cockerels are kept together, such fights are of frequent occurrence, as every poultry raiser is aware. Their bleeding combs, head, and bodies testify to the injuries which they receive, and many of them become disfigured for life. This involves frequent losses and is a great annoyance, to say nothing of the inconvenience inseparable from having a large lot of cockerels around.

After being caponized, the habits of the birds are radically changed. They become very quiet in their disposition, mild in their habits, are disposed to lead a solitary life, and are ready to sleep where night overtakes them. They are not running all over the farm, working their flesh off as fast as it can be put on, chasing the hens, and fighting with other fowls until badly disfigured. They no longer disturb the neighborhood by their constant crowing from sunrise to sunset, and when ready for

market they do not have to be sold for ten cents a pound and only reach an average weight of four pounds. The performance of the operation of caponizing is not cruel or brutal, but on the contrary, it prevents much cruelty of the most brutish kind, and causes the fowl to lead a quiet life, peaceful to himself and profitable to his owner.

#### NOT DIFFICULT TO LEARN.

With all the advantages which this system offers, it is certainly strange that Americans have so long delayed learning to caponize their fowls. I say "learning," for I believe that it is very desirable, though not absolutely necessary, for a person who intends to caponize, to have some practical caponizer present when he operates on his first subject, to instruct and assist him. It may not take ten minutes to learn, but it is very pleasant to have some one that understands the work to stand by the beginner, and give the benefit of the knowledge which has been acquired by experience, to answer the many questions that he is almost sure to propound, to be ready to help him out, should his patience become exhausted. After he has performed upon a few birds, it will be amusing to the instructor to observe how very independent his pupil has become, and with what assurance he proceeds with his work. The teacher's occupation is gone with that person.

My experience in teaching people to caponize, has, in a very practical way, brought my attention to the fact that there is a general impression among farmers and poultry men, that it is an extremely difficult operation, fraught with all sorts of dangers to the life and health of the bird, and that it can only be performed successfully by an expert, who has given a great amount of time and study to the work. Though general, this impression is altogether incorrect.

#### LEARNING WITHOUT A TEACHER.

Many letters I receive from parties seeking information on this subject, contain the following questions: "Do you think I could caponize with the instruments that you manufacture, and without the aid of a teacher?" "If I should buy a set of your tools, do you honestly think I could caponize successfully, by following the instructions you send with them?" "Is it a very difficult operation to perform?" "Does it require practice to do it successfully?"

To such questions I reply: Yes you can perform the operation of caponizing just as well as I can, after your first two or three subjects, but it is like everything else—to be successful, you must have confidence in your own ability to do the work. If you go at it with fear and trembling, are afraid to give a little pain in order to prevent future suffering, you had better not undertake the job.

The idea, to any one who has caponized, that any such feelings should exist in any man of ordinary intelligence, seems absurd, and yet from the letters I receive I judge that they are not uncommon. There is no good reason for their existence. Any poultry raiser would laugh, if he were told he could not kill and dress a fowl, yet it is fully as difficult to do this work well as it is to caponize one. Fully as much care should be exercised, and it takes four times as long. Any man, woman, or child that has reached the age of understanding and has an ordinary amount of intelligence, can perform the operation, and should not hesitate to do so at any proper time. Any one who will obtain a set of good instruments and carefully follow the directions which are furnished with them, will unquestionably succeed in performing the operation satisfactorily in a surprisingly short time and with very little effort.

If this fear or dread of undertaking it, that I know really exists, especially among farmers, could be overcome, and people could be induced to caponize their fowls, thousands of dollars might be added to the incomes of poultry raisers every year, as the value of all cockerels could thereby be doubled. With a little practice any one can easily caponize twenty-five cockerels in a forenoon. This number would give the owner fine capons for his table all

winter, also some for market. Here let me say to those who have never eaten capon meat, that, after having once partaken of nice roast capon, the cockerel chick will seem very poor eating.

Those who have not the confidence in their own ability to perform the operation should employ a practical caponizer to teach them. After the knowledge is once gained, it will be useful through life. But few people really need a teacher. Even if a few birds die as the result of unskilful work, no great harm is done. They die just as easily as though their heads were cut off, and just as quickly. As they make excellent broilers, there is nothing directly lost by the failure of the operation.

#### THE INSTRUMENTS REQUIRED.

In performing the operation it is very important that the operator should have the proper kind of instruments with which to do his work: this in order that the work may be done easily and quickly, and also that the fowl shall experience as little pain as possible. The principal cause of failures with the beginner in caponizing is the lack of proper tools with which to do the work. He buys a set of instruments that are beautifully nickel or silver plated, in a fine rose-wood case, with velvet linings, pays a high price for the same, and of course supposes he has obtained tools perfectly adapted to the work, when in reality they are but little better suited

for the purpose than a set of garden tools would be.

Of course the purchaser is not aware of this. He thinks he has got what he paid for. So he proceeds to work with them, and the result is too often a failure. Sometimes when he thinks he has succeeded, he finds his mistake latter on, when his subject proves to be only a "slip." He naturally becomes discouraged, decides that caponizing is a failure, and soon gives it up.

If it would end there it would not be very bad. But it does not. This man has many neighbors and friends who are waiting to see how he succeeds before they purchase instruments. The news of his failure spreads all over the neighborhood, and perhaps a hundred poultry raisers, not one of whom knows that failure was caused by the want of suitable instruments, are deterred from adopting the practice of caponizing.

Any set of instruments made up with spoon nippers for taking away the testicle should be discarded at once, as being clumsy and cruel in their operation, and entirely unfit for the work. This form of instrument is the cause of more "slips," pain, and losses than any tool brought into use. In nine cases out of ten they only bring away part of the testicle, leaving enough to certainly cause a slip, or else the sac that envelops the testicles is left, which should never

occur. More frequently the artery next the testicle is ruptured by their use, and a dead bird is the result.

After trying all the instruments intended for the work that I could find, I came to the conclusion that none of them were just right. I therefore designed a set after my own ideas of what was needed. They do the work quickly, in a very simple manner, require very little skill in handling, and cause but little pain to the fowl. Their simplicity of action renders them particularly desirable for beginners, and renders success pretty sure at the first trial.

In their construction all style, fancy finish, and rose-wood cases are discarded, and in their place utility, strength, and simplicity, which are the qualities desired, will be found.

The set consists of five pieces, or tools, as follows:

No. 1 is a lancet or knife made in the proper shape for the use it is intended to serve.

No. 2 is a spring or stretcher of improved design, and so shaped that when inserted in the cut it can be gauged instantly to spring the sides apart as much or little as is desired, or the size of the chicken will allow. At the same time it lies in such a position as to be entirely out of the way of the operator. Most of the tools made do not have this guage. Consequently the spreader exerts its full force on all

subjects. This is wrong. A small chick, whose ribs are soft and tender, does not require the same force of spring to spread the cut as a larger fowl, and it is cruel to use as much. Many spreaders are either short or are in the operator's way when in place. All such should be avoided.

No. 3 is a pick or hook, intended to pick open the tissue of thin skin which envelops the bowels and testicles.

No. 4 is my improved hair-holder and testicle-abstracter. It is a long smooth, pointed tube, with two small holes at the small end through which a horse hair is passed. Both ends of the horse hair come out at the larger end of the tube far enough to allow the operator to grasp them with his thumb and finger, thus causing a little loop to form at the small end. This loop can be easily drooped over the testicle, and the operator pulling up on the hairs, the testicle, sac and all, is at once brought out of the fowl, and with but little danger. The horse hair being smooth and fine, it at once slips in between the testicles and artery, and does the work in a thorough manner, without rupturing the artery or causing hemorrhage. It is all over in a moment, and with its use no one need fear a failure.

No. 5 is a pair of forceps or pincers, with flat end, to be used in abstracting or picking up any

foreign substance (feathers, etc.) that may have gotten into the wound while performing the work. The flat end is to be used in moving the bowels back out of the way, when required.

These tools are made of dental tool steel and brass. They are made for use and not for ornament, and will last for a life-time.

#### OTHER REQUIREMENTS.

The next requisite to a good set of instruments is to have good light, bright and clear, to enable the operator to see into the fowl, when the important and delicate work is done. This one can have any fair day, and no other should be selected for the work. By placing the working table in the proper position, and so arranging it that the light will fall where wanted, the operator will experience no trouble. From nine in the morning until three in the afternoon is the best time in the day to caponize as the sun is then overhead and its light can be directed where wanted.

The next, and last requisite, is a proper kind of table or bench upon which to perform the work. Barrels and boxes are not suitable, as besides being unsteady, they are not provided with straps to hold the fowl, and are not roomy enough. The operator should have plenty of room for the fowl, and for all his tools without having them crowded. The French method is to have another person hold the fowl while the

operator performs. But this is too expensive a way for Americans, and is entirely unnecessary, as a table can easily be made which will answer every purpose.

#### BREEDS FOR CAPONIZING.

Any breed of cockerels can be greatly increased in weight by being caponized. The larger breeds, of course, make much larger capons than the smaller ones, but the latter are increased in weight in proportion to their natural size. Still persons who are raising capons for market should always select the larger breeds or good crosses. All things considered, the Plymouth Rock is the best breed to keep for caponizing, eggs, and everything, although the Light Brahmans are about as good. A cross of the two would be better for capons alone. Some claim that the largest capons are obtained by crossing a Dorking cock on Brahma or Cochin hens. After doing this, I should re-cross with a Plymouth Rock to get a full-beasted fowl with yellow skin and legs, and more particularly a handsome plumage. The matter of plumage is an important one in capons for market, as much of it is allowed to remain on when dressed, and it adds greatly to the appearance of the bird.

#### THE PROPER AGE.

Cockerels can be caponized at any age, but it is not desirable or advisable to perform the op-

eration after they are six or seven months old, for the reason that their organs have then become too firmly established in performing their functions. If one wishes, however, he can caponize a rooster four years old, but with much more risk of losing him, and the result of the operation would not be very satisfactory, as the fowl had lived far too long as a rooster.

Neither is it well to caponize chicks when too young, as the testicles are not sufficiently developed to remove with ease, being very tender and soft, and easily broken. The frame of a very young chicken is so small and tender to work on conveniently. When they have arrived at the age of two months, cockerels may be performed upon, provided they are of sufficient size. The right size is what is wanted, regardless of age. They should weigh at least from a pound to a pound and a half. From this age up to six months' old is the best to select for the work. Should they become too large at the later age, or become active roosters, it will not be advisable to perform the operation, although it may be done if desired.

June, July, August, September, and October are the months usually selected for caponizing, not only for the reason that the spring chickens arrive at the proper age and weight during these months, but also because the cockerels caponized then will arrive at the proper age and

weight for the market during the months of January, February, March, April, and May, when there is the greatest demand for them in our cities, and the highest prices can be secured. During these months the capon fills the gap between the fall chicken and the spring broiler, and also takes the place of game, which is then "shut out" by law in many states.

The fact that capons could only be procured during these months, the supply being so limited, is the only reason why there appears to have been "a season" established for capons. There is no reason why they should not be in our markets every day in the year, and the time is not far distant when they will be.

This field of occupation with its large profits is open to the American poultry raiser and farmer, and should not be neglected.

#### WHERE THEY SUCCEED.

By the correspondence that I receive I find that there is an impression existing that capons cannot be raised successfully north of New Jersey. This impression is doubtless formed from the facts that people in New Jersey were the first to adopt caponizing extensively, and that they are to-day the largest producers of capons. Having found that it paid them handsomely, they have continued the practice, and have been increasing their product every year.

In this way they have gained the reputation of being the only people that could raise capons. Philadelphia is the market to which they send, and from there the birds are shipped to all parts of the United States. Hence their common name of "Philadelphia Capon."

The farmer in New England, Canada, or the West can raise just as fine capons as the man in New Jersey. Of course the latter can raise his chicks a little earlier by natural means, than the man in Canada, and consequently can have full-grown capons a little earlier. But it is no particular object at the present day, with our markets as sparsely supplied as they now are with capons, for one to exert himself very much to obtain early birds. A good capon will sell as well in March or April as in January, and a May-hatched chick will become of sufficient size for market in March if caponized in August or September.

Every one knows that a lot of late hatched chicks that in the fall are not suitable for market, are of little value and would not pay to winter as cockerels. Now if these were caponized and carried over until another fall, they would become valuable. Their value as cockerels is not over twenty-five cents. It would not cost over seventy-five cents to feed them, and the following fall they could be sold for from two to three dollars each.

## HOW TO CAPONIZE.

Twenty-six hours beforehand, select such cockerels from your lot as you intend to caponize, and confine them in a clean, airy coop, or room, without food or water. It is the best to confine them at night, as their long fast then ends on a morning, at which time you want to perform upon. Should that morning happen to be cloudy or wet, do not undertake to caponize them then, but let your birds go over until you have a bright, fair morning, in which to do the work. Then they may be given a little water and food if necessary, although this should be avoided if possible, for the reason that it is very desirable to have their intestines nearly empty, thus allowing the testicles to be readily seen and giving the operator much more room in which to perform his work.

If you have a large number of cockerels to be caponized, do not shut up to many at once. Twenty-five or thirty at a time are enough, and as many as a beginner will want to do at one time.

If I were to select just such a chick as best suited me to caponize, I should pick out one that was about three months old and weighed from one and one-half to two pounds. But it is not to be supposed that we can always have our pick. Neither is it at all necessary that we should. Our business is to caponize them all.

## MAKING A TABLE.

While the birds are fasting, it will be well for the operator to construct a table on which to work.

This can be easily done, by any one, with four pieces of two by three inch scantling and a board three feet long and fourteen inches or more wide.

The table is made in the following manner: In a board of the above dimensions bore a hole two inches in diameter, at the place shown in cut, where back of the fowl will rest. This hole is intended for the loop which holds the wings, to drop through, with a weight attached to it underneath the table, to draw and hold the wings down firmly upon the table.

Next cut a slot in the board (at the place shown in cut) about one foot long and one and one-half inches wide. This is designed to hold the end of the "leg holder" firmly, and at the same time allow it to be moved right or left or *vice versa*, to adapt itself to the length of the cockerel. The leg holder is made of any piece of flat wood, about two feet long and three inches wide, with the end which projects in front of the table formed into a handle. This should be covered, where it leans on the legs of the fowl, with several wrappings of cloth, to prevent bruising, and hurting the legs, when it is brought to bear on them.

At the handle end, and just clear of the table, a weight should be attached as heavy as a half a brick, with a string a foot long, allowing the weight to hang down. Several weights should be near at hand to select from. The larger the bird, the heavier the weight required to hold his legs steady.

The other end of this leg holder is attached to the table, at the slot, by tying a small piece of wood, about four inches long and two inches wide, to the leg holder, six inches from the end of the same. The connection should be made through the slot, allowing sufficient string in tying, to permit the leg holder to move back and forth in the slot. The small piece of wood underneath will hold it in place, wherever you may wish to stop it. This leg holder, as the name implies, is intended to hold the fowl's legs firmly in place when put under it.

The board to the right of the round hole should be covered with a piece of thick smooth canvass (two or three thicknesses are better) to make a comfortable place for the fowl to lie upon. Legs should now be made for the table. These can be made saw-horse fashion and any height desired by the operator. I prefer a high table, just above my waist, as it is much more convenient for a man standing to his work than a lower one.

It is much easier to perform the operation

standing than sitting, as one has to move in every direction to get the proper light. The board described is then nailed to the legs. A wing holder is then to be made similar to the leg holder, one end of which is attached to the back side of the table ten inches from the top. This may be made by nailing a small cleat to the edge of the table, letting it project down that distance. Attach the wing holder to the end of it with a string which will allow it to play as much as may be required. A loop made of a soft, strong woolen strip, about a foot long, is then made, and slipped over the wing holder.

The other end of the wing holder comes out at the front of the table, near the operator, and is used for a handle. A weight, similar to that used for leg holder, is attached to it by a string six inches long, and ten inches from the handle end. A small rest cleat is nailed to front legs of the table to allow the wing holder to rest on, when it is lifted up, after performing the operation, and you wish to loosen or free the fowl.

The loop, after being passed over the wing holder, is passed up through the round hole, and serves to pass over both wings at once. In doing so, it should be pushed well up to where the wings join the body; then the wing holder may be let down, the weight causing it

to pull the wings down tight to the table, and the bird is thus held firmly to operate upon.

The rest of the table is needed on which to place your tools. Little strips should be nailed to the edge of the table to prevent the tools from slipping off.

It is important to have your tools carefully laid out, with each one in a particular place, so that you can put your hand upon any one in an instant.

The importance of having such a table will be fully realized by all, when they commence caponizing. Its cost is not worth mentioning. Besides your tools it is well to have a lot of long horse hairs on the table where you can get one quickly, should the one you are using break, as it will sometimes do.

Assuming that the operator has already procured the proper tools to work with, that his chickens are ready, and that he has a fair day, his next move is to select a place, where he will not be disturbed and where the full light of the sun will fall upon his table from behind, or rather side-ways.

Place all your tools on the table, first threading your tube with a horse hair, letting the hair form a small loop at the small end, and run well out at the other end.

Now you are ready for the operation, and must be prepared for quick work. But do not

get excited. If you do your hand will tremble, and you cannot work to advantage.

Select a cockerel from those you have confined (one that is rather poor is best to begin with), handling him as gently as possible, and place him on the table with his left side up. Slip the loop that is attached to the wing holder over the fowl's wings, and push it well up to where they join the body. Let your weight down, and by so doing the wings and the body of the fowl are secured firmly to the table. Next stretch his legs out straight from the body, and gently pull as far to the right of the table as possible, first raising your leg holder to allow them to lay under the same. Place one leg a little in front of the other so that they will lay flat on the table, and then let the leg holder down upon them in order to hold them in place.

You now have your bird in a position from which it is impossible for him to move, which is what is desired. He is in an uncomfortable, though not painful position, and one in which the operation can be most readily performed. The operator should now do his work as rapidly as possible, to save annoying the fowl longer than absolutely necessary.

Proceed to pluck the feathers from the upper part of the two last ribs and just in front of the thigh joint. Some people call them the

two first ribs, which is wrong and confusing. If you should cut between the two first ribs you would cut into the lungs and kill the bird.

Pull out enough feathers to give you plenty of space to work, as they will trouble you very much, if left on near the cut, while you are performing the operation. In plucking the feathers, do not pull out one at a time, but hold the skin firmly with the left hand while with the right you pull out all the feathers you can take up at once with the thumb and finger. Pulling out one at a time is too slow, and very much more annoying to the fowl.

Take hold of the fowl as if you were not afraid you would hurt it, and with the left hand push the skin as far as you can towards the thigh joint and back, and hold it there while with the right hand you take the lancet—which should be very sharp—and insert it quickly between the two last ribs, cutting first down and then up a little, and making a cut not over an inch long. The smaller the cut the better, provided always that it is large enough to enable you to work in the fowl to advantage. Cut deep enough to go through the skin and ribs, but be very careful not to go so deep as to cut the intestines. There is very little danger of doing this, however, if they are empty, as they should be. The danger of cutting them is when they are full, as in this state they press against the ribs.

Little or no blood will appear unless the thin flap of flesh is cut that lies just over the ribs at this place, and which should have been forced back with the skin. No harm is done, however, if this is cut, the only objection being, that it is apt to bleed a little, and can just as well be avoided. Should the cut bleed, stop a moment and let the blood clot on the thin skin covering the bowels, and then remove it with the hook.

Next insert the small flat hooks on the end of the springs, letting each one press against the rib on either side, and at the same time, guage your spring to press the cut open as much or little as you desire, regulating that according to the size of your chicken. A large chicken requires very much more spring power to spread the cut, than a little fellow whose ribs are small and have not become firm. The spring that is sent out with my set of instruments, can be inserted and removed in an instant, will hold in its place firmly, and can be gauged at once.

After the spring is inserted, both hands will again be free to work with, and the operator should be impressed with the importance of working as fast as he can, without getting "rattled," as the boys say.

In looking into the cut, a thin tissue, or skin, will be perceived just under the ribs and envel-

oping the bowels, which skin perhaps the knife cut a little near the back of the fowl, when the first incision was made. Take the steel hook and tear or pick this tissue open, so as to enable you to get into the fowl with your tools. It will readily yeild to the hook, and its rup-ture does not cause the slightest pain to the bird. One of the testicles will then be brought plainly to view, lying close up to the back of the fowl. Sometimes both testicles are in sight, but is not usually the case, as the other one lies beyond and more on the other side of the fowl, and the intestines prevent its being seen from this opening.

By moving the intestines and tissues it may be brought to view, but so located as to be very inconvenient to remove from this opening, as will be explained farther along in this work.

The person who has never caponized will perhaps, at first be at a loss to determine just where the testicles are, and how they should appear. Their appearance is very different in the different breeds of fowls, but their position is the same with all unless deformed.

In a Plymouth Rock they are, at the age of three months, quite small, and look like a little yellow roll half an inch long and shaped like a kernel of grain, but larger. Their color varies, however, being sometimes red, white or black, but generally they are yellow or straw color.

In a Leghorn they are much larger at the same age, as this bird matures very young. I have frequently taken them away as large as robin's eggs from this breed. The skin which envelops them is also much tougher than in some other breeds. In the Brahma they are very much smaller, and longer, and are attached much closer to the artery alongside, making them more difficult to remove safely.

The testicle thus brought to view, is enveloped in a film which should not be removed, but brought away with the testicles. I have seen parties in caponizing, tear this skin open and then take the testicle out. This is wrong, for if this skin is left, it will be likely to cause a "slip."

Should the intestines not have become sufficiently emptied, they may occupy so much space as to prevent the operator from at first seeing the testicle. In this case he should gently push the bowels back with the flat end of the forceps, when he will be able to see it plainly. The bowels may at any time be thus moved about, without fear of injury if carefully done. It is frequently necessary to move them.

We next come to the only dangerous part of the whole operation, which is the getting hold of the testicles, and removing the same. At this point the loss occurs, if anywhere, but with a steady hand and good light, not one bird in fifteen need be lost.

Attached to the testicle, laying back of it, is one of the principal arteries of the fowl, and which if ruptured is sure to cause death as quickly as the cutting off of the fowl's head. At this point my improved tube and horse hair prove of very great advantage. The hair being small and fine is easily slipped in between the testicle and artery, without injury to either, while if the spoon nippers are used, they are very apt to seize the artery at the same time they do the testicle, and thus rupture it, or else they only take part of the testicle, leaving enough to certainly cause a slip.

If the least portion of the testicle is left in the fowl it will grow again, and the fowl instead of being a capon, becomes what is known in market as a slip. That is, he is about half rooster and half capon, and is worth but little more than a good chicken, as he becomes active again among the hens. In fact his activity is just about doubled, and he is worse than any rooster to have around.

To proceed with the operation: You will next take the tube or hair-holder in the right hand, first adjusting the horse hair in it so that a loop about half an inch long will protrude from the small end, leaving the two ends of the hair to extend from the large end of the tube sufficiently far to enable you to secure a good hold. Insert the end of tube with the loop on it, care-

fully, and slip the loop over both ends of the testicle and around it, holding the point of the tube closely down to the testicle. When this is accomplished, take both ends of the horse hair, which come out at the other end of the tube, with the thumb and finger, holding it tight, and draw up on it carefully but firmly, watching all the time to see that the loop has caught around and back of the testicle. Keep the tube closely down to the testicle all the time.

In pulling up the hair, one naturally pulls up the tube also, which he should not do, as the effect is to give a larger loop and causes it to slip off. Pull on the hairs, but only twist the tube a little to help break away the testicle.

The loop will sometimes slip off, when not properly caught on, and trouble you a little, on some fowls whose testicles grow very close to artery, but after a few trials, you will succeed in grasping it very quickly.

At this point in the operation, the beginner will feel nervous and perhaps become alarmed for the comfort and safety of his fowl. But just at this state of the performance he must keep cool and not let the condition of the fowl give him the slightest uneasiness, even if he has to work on him for half an hour, which he may have to do on his first cockerel. The operation can usually be performed, however, in three minutes.

After you have secured the loop to the testicle, as described, and have pulled the horse hair up tight, you should next twist the tube one way and the other, but not entirely round, at the same time pulling up on the horse hair, until you feel the testicle giving way, when it may be brought out of the bird, the hair holding it fast.

In many cases the operator will have to pull quite strongly to start the testicle, while in other cases it comes away very easily. The thin skin which envelops it should come away with the testicle.

After the testicle is removed, examine the inside of the bird carefully, to see that no piece is left in, and that no foreign substance has gotten into the bird. If the latter occurs, it is necessary to extract it, for if allowed to remain, it is liable to cause inflammation. Sometimes a feather, or a part of the testicle, drops into the opening, and care should be exercised to remove the same at once. Move the intestines around until it is found, and remove with the nippers.

When all this is done, remove the spring at once. The skin will then slip back over the cut, which will heal very quickly. It is neither necessary or desirable to sew the cut. The skin slipping back over it, prevents air from getting in, and it heals as quickly as any light flesh wound.

Turn the bird over and proceed in exactly the same way on the other side.

A writer on the subject of caponizing whose writings have been extensively copied by the agricultural papers of this country, says that "the testicles can be taken out with thumb and finger." If we consider the size of an incision sufficiently large to admit the thumb and finger of a man, and remember that it is to be made in the body of a living creature weighing less than two pounds, the cruelty and danger of attempting to perform the operation in this manner will appear at a glance. The only way to perform the operation quickly and safely, is to get the proper tools and use the thumb and finger in handling the same.

Some recommend taking both testicles from one side. It can be done, but it is very difficult and is attended with much danger to the life of the bird, as the other testicle is situated too far over on the other side to be reached conveniently from the first cut. By turning the bird over and performing on the other side, the testicle on that side is brought plainly to view, and can be taken away in half the time, with much less difficulty. The bird recovers just as quickly as though only a single operation were performed.

#### AFTER CAPONIZING.

Immediately after the second testicle is re-

moved, the fowl should be marked and released. Carry him by the wings, taking hold close to the body, to a cool coop or room, so arranged inside that he cannot roost. Flying up and down to a roost is apt to cause the wound to open, and retard healing.

Give him plenty of water to drink and feed at once with soft feed. Give him all he will eat and leave him to take care of himself. Caponized fowls will immediately begin to eat, and one would never suppose that anything had happened to mar the even tenor of their ways. The best of caponizers expect to lose a small percentage of birds, from one cause or another, so that a beginner need not feel alarmed if he should lose ten birds in a hundred, though he is not likely to do so if proper care is used.

Feed and water should be kept with them constantly the first week. It will be noticed that they develop an insatiable appetite immediately after being caponized. They should be supplied with all the food they want. It all goes to form flesh and promote growth.

The second day after caponizing the birds should all be looked over, as many, if not all of them will "wind puff" and require pricking. By the effort of breathing, the air gets under the skin, causing it to puff up on the sides and hips of the bird. It becomes necessary then to catch him, prick through the skin on the sides

with a pointed knife, and gently press the wind out. This can all be done in an instant, and is a relief to the capon. This operation may have to be performed several times or until the cut is well healed, which will be in a very few days. In two weeks from the time of caponizing, one would hardly know where the incision had been made. By this time the capon may be allowed to run at large with the rest of the fowls, and should be treated as you would treat any poultry that is growing.

#### CHANGE IN APPEARANCE AND DISPOSITION.

After the operation the whole nature and appearance of the birds seem to change. Their bodies grow very rapidly, but their comb and gills cease to grow, and they cannot crow. Their plumage becomes very profuse, and when grown it is very brilliant. The feathers on their neck (hackle) and on the legs and thighs become very thick and long.

They increase very rapidly in flesh, which becomes white, tender, and delicious. They become very docile in their habits, and yet are very dignified in their carriage. They also have one peculiar characteristic. Next to a woman, I think they are the most curious creatures in the world. They are very quiet about it, however, but they are bound to see and investigate anything and everything that comes under their observation. If an article of any

kind is left where they are, they are sure to be into it at once. They lose their shyness or timidity almost entirely, and while they will not fight, yet they are always ready to be the cause of a quarrel. In many respects their habits are like the hen.

#### FREEDOM FROM DISEASE.

From my experience of ten years, I am led to believe that caponizing is a preventive of disease. After recovering from the operation, capons seem to be entirely free from diseases to which other fowls are subject. Whether this is the result of caponizing, I am not absolutely sure, but I know that one very rarely sees a sick or ailing capon. They are generally strong, vigorous, and hearty. All they require is cleanliness, light, and proper ventilation, a good warm shelter in winter, and regularity in feeding.

Caponos do not mature, or reach their full growth, until about one year old. In fact, they will increase in size up to two years old, but it is not profitable to keep them after a year old, unless to act as mothers to chicks.

At the age of twelve months they are ready for the market. They will weigh from eight to fourteen pounds, according to the breed, and they have not cost the owner over seventy-five cents.

## DRESSING CAPONS.

A capon should be dressed very differently from a common chicken. When your capons are ready for market, pick out as many as you intend to dress, and confine them. Give them no food or water for twenty-four hours previous to killing, in order that their crops may get entirely empty. Next prepare your place for dressing by driving two nails in a beam overhead, about one foot apart. Then make two loops of stout string, each long enough to confine a leg to each of these nails and let the capon down low enough to be handy to pluck.

Provide a weight of two or three pounds, and a hook with which to attach the weight to the bird's lower jaw after he is killed and hung up to pick. The weight is used to hold the bird steady for picking. Have a table upon which to dress the fowl, and a frame made like a small box with the cover and two ends knocked out. This is to lay your capon in back down, while removing the intestines.

When all is ready, catch your capon and hang him to the nails. Take hold of his head, and using a knife with a long pointed blade, cut the vein in the back of the throat, performing the operation through the capon's mouth and not on the outside. At the same time run the point of the knife up through the roof of the mouth into the brain. This causes instant

death, and also causes the feathers to come off very readily. The moment the knife enters the brain, all sense of feeling leaves the bird, and you must proceed immediately to pluck the feathers.

This is an important part of the operation. Many of the feathers are left on; viz., all the head and hackle feathers, and also those on the legs half way up the "drum-stick." Leave the wing feathers on up to the second joint, and all the tail feathers, together with those a little way up the back. Also the long feathers on the hip near the tail. This is done because the feathers on a capon are very profuse and extra long, and they serve to distinguish the fowl as a capon in the market, and at the same time add to his appearance.

The head is also to be left on as a distinguishing feature. A capon can be identified by its head, the comb and wattles having ceased to grow when the operation of caponizing was performed. Wash the head and mouth carefully with cold water, getting off all the blood. Care should be taken in picking the feathers, not to get blood upon those which are to remain, and not to tear the flesh of the capon.

Remove the weight and put your bird in the box described, back down, and carefully cut around the rectum, when you can pull the intestines out like a rope. They will be covered

with fat, which, as you pull them out, should be pushed back. When the end of the intestines is reached, put your fingers up in the fowl and break it off, leaving in everything else. The fat will be very heavy around the opening made, and should be carefully turned outward, when it will soon cool and become hard.

Hang your bird up in a clean place to cool. The feathers that are picked off will be very nice, and should be saved to sell or use. The birds should hang until thoroughly cold. When ready to pack, get a clean, new box the proper size, line it with white paper, not newspaper, and pack your capons in, back up. Pack them in solid, but do not bruise them. They are then ready for market.

Five years ago one could not find a capon at the poultry shows in the United States. No premiums were offered for them, and but little interest taken in this class of fowls. At the present time one will find at many of the shows an exhibition of capons, and in many of their lists a premium is offered for them alive and dressed.

As already shown, the operation of caponizing is not difficult to perform, and there seem to be plenty of reasons why it should be generally practiced.

Extract from an article I wrote for the *Poultry and Stock Review*: "Early in the season I

engaged a lot to a party in Albany, N. Y., and proceeded to kill and dress them. Although they were of good size, and plump, yet I did not really feel like killing them so early, for I knew they would take on considerable more weight at very little cost, but concluded to do so, as my object was to ascertain the profit of an early market for Capons.

They were carefully dressed in the manner that Capons should be, and after they were cooled off and ready to pack, they weighed two hundred and two pounds or an average of a little over eight pounds to each Capon. I received twenty-eight cents a pound for the lot, packed and delivered to express company here.

Now lets see how the whole experiment figured out. It cost me a little less than fifty cents a bird to feed from the time I received them. This amounted to twelve dollars and fifty cents. The manure they made would pay for their care but I allowed ten cents a bird for this labor. Thus the total expenditure on the twenty-five birds was twenty-one dollars, I received fifty-six dollars for the same from which deduct the cost, and I made a profit of thirty-five dollars on the lot. I have thus very nearly doubled my money."

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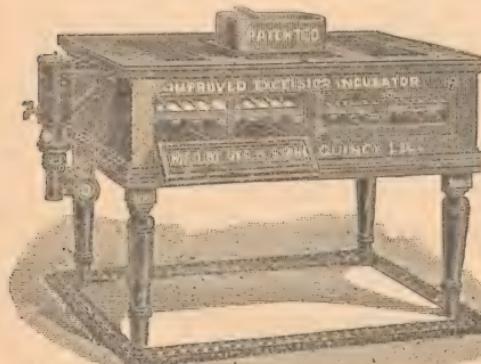
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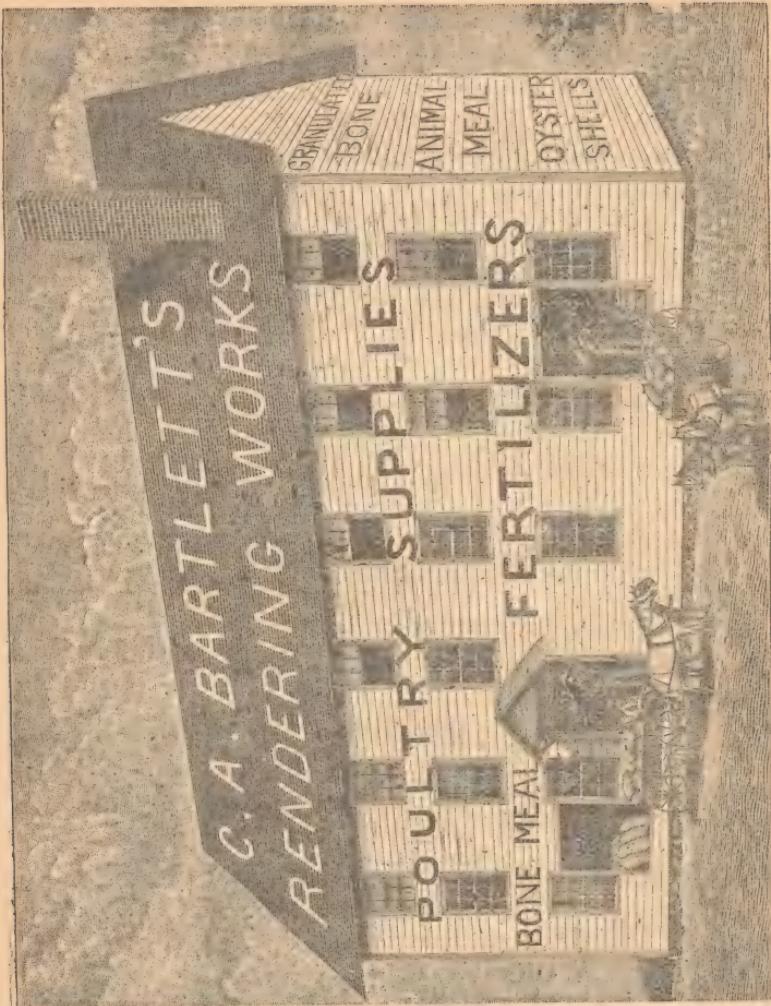
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After a practical experience of a number of years, and caponizing hundreds of chickens, Mr. Dow has at last invented a set of tools for caponizing that do the work in a very simple and perfect manner, with hardly a chance of losing a fowl. His aim was to get up tools of such perfect design for what they were intended, that any farmer, poultryman or boy could caponize successfully, and at the same time have the cost low, and in offering these tools, we are sure he has at last succeeded. There is no reason why every farmer and poultryman should not caponize his cockerels, whether they be for market or home consumption. It is a positive fact that he can add one dollar in value to every cockerel he caponizes. Then why not order a set of our tools and go at it?

The instruments are manufactured of fine dental tool steel and brass, and consists of five tools, viz: a Lancet, or knife to make the incision; a Pick-hook, for picking open the tissue covering of the bowels; a Spring, of special design for springing the cut open. This spring lays perfectly flat, entirely out of the operator's way, and has a guage on it which can be operated in an instant to spring the cut open more or less, as may be desired. A pair of Nippers, to pick up any substance that may get into the cut while operating; a long Tube or horse-hair holder, which is intended to hold the hair, and direct it around the testicle and bring it out whole, and all at once, the sac coming with it. This it does every time, quickly and well. With the instruments we send full and explicit directions how to caponize, describing fully each movement to be made, and the use of each tool. The instruments are packed in a box, together with instructions, and sent anywhere by mail post-paid for \$2.50.

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